



FAMILY-LEVEL CULTURAL CAPITAL AND PUPILS' PREPAREDNESS FOR UPPER PRIMARY IN NAKURU COUNTY, KENYA

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Abstract:

Pupils' mastery of lower primary curriculum is a critical determinant of their academic achievement in upper primary and consequently their performance in the final examination at the primary cycle of education. Pupils' cumulative performance in Kenya in the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) exit examination averaged at 250.4 marks out of the possible maximum of 500 marks from 2012 to 2016. Pupils' performance during the same period in Nakuru County where the study was conducted averaged at 244.6 marks. The noted low performance in the County could be linked to inadequate mastery of lower primary curriculum which forms the foundation for learning the relatively challenging curriculum in upper primary. Although pupils' mastery of lower primary curriculum is dependent on many factors, the study addressed itself to family cultural capital for it was construed to be one of the critical home-level correlates of academic achievement in lower primary. Using an *ex-post facto* research design, data were collected from 254 class three teachers in Nakuru County through a personally delivered questionnaire and analysed using simple regression statistic at 0.05 alpha level. The results revealed a significant linear relationship ($F=3.491$; $df=253$; $P<.05$) between family cultural capital and pupils' preparedness for upper primary. The study further showed that the beta value ($\beta=.111$) was positive and statistically significant ($t=1.770$; $P<.05$). These findings indicated that the selected aspects of family cultural capital were not only impacting positively on pupils' preparedness for upper primary but the impact was also statistically significant. The adjusted R^2 value ($R^2=.472$) further revealed that the selected aspects of family cultural capital accounted for 47% of total variation in pupils' preparedness for upper primary.

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The study offers useful insights on how families can build cultural capital in their children which they will build on as they progress through lower primary. This will go a long way in increasing their level of preparedness for upper primary, and consequently raise their academic achievement in the KCPE examination.

Keywords: family cultural capital, lower primary pupils, preparedness, upper primary

1. Introduction

Provision of formal education is one of the key areas of public spending in Kenya. For instance, total public expenditure on education (as a percentage of GDP) averaged at 18% from 2013 to 2015 out of which 36% was expended on primary education (UNESCO, 2016). The relatively high expenditure on primary education is predicted on the fact that this level of schooling lays the foundation for successful progression of pupils to the subsequent levels of education and training.

Primary education in Kenya comprises of two tiers, namely the lower and upper primary. In the lower primary tier, pupils are taught Kiswahili and English languages in addition to elementary Mathematics, Sciences and Social Studies (UNESCO, 2012; Orodho & Ondieki, 2015). The five subjects are taught in upper primary at a relatively higher level of complexity. Pupils' mastery of the subjects (which forms the criteria for secondary school admission) is judged by their level of performance in the KCPE examination (Kiumi, 2017). That being the case, it can rightly be reasoned that level of pupils' performance in the KCPE examination is contingent upon the extent to which they are grounded in the lower primary curriculum.

It is instructive to note that pupils' performance nationally in Kenya Certificate of Primary Education examination averaged at 250.4 marks (out of a possible maximum of 500 marks) from 2012 to 2016 while in Nakuru County where the study was conducted pupils' average performance was 244.6 marks during the five-year period (Kenya National Examination Council, 2017). Although KCPE examination performance nationally was not impressive, the results in Nakuru County were disappointing since they imply that a significant proportion of KCPE examination candidates in the county could be experiencing challenges in securing secondary school places.

Godia and Waiyaki (1988) have observed that it is the family relationships that children learn their first lessons in social living, social behaviour and their society's way of life. This view is consistent with Fan's (2001) contention that, by nature, home is the first school that all children attend since, parents actively engage with children during their development cycle. Inferring from these observations, it can be argued that the family is a key independent variable capable of explaining educational attainment. Specifically, families that transmit to their children (through socialization) those aspects of cultural capital (e.g., language, communication skills, behaviour and so on) that approximate what is taught in school are more likely to receive higher returns as measured in terms of their children's progression in school. The corollary to this is that

children who come to school with cultural capital deficits may experience learning challenges and consequently achieve lower learning outcomes (Willingham, 2012).

The foregoing observations on the nexus between family cultural capital and educational outcomes bring to the fore one critical question: Is there a likelihood that the low level of pupils' performance in the KCPE examination in Nakuru County be linked to inadequate cultural capital assets among learners, and more so during their lower grades? In an attempt to answer this question, the study selected ten dimensions of home-level cultural capital which were construed as potentially capable of influencing lower primary pupils' learning achievement and by implication readiness to handle upper primary curriculum. The presumed relationship between the ten cultural capital factors and pupils' preparedness for upper primary was determined through simple regression analysis at 0.05 alpha level. The guiding hypothesis was stated thus:

Ho: Family-level cultural capital has no statistically significant influence on pupils' preparedness for upper primary in Nakuru County, Kenya.

2. Theoretical Framework

The study was based on the theory of cultural capital which was construed as potentially capable of enhancing our understanding of the link between home environment and level of pupils' preparedness for upper primary. According to Bourdieu (1986), home-level cultural capital in the context of schooling process denotes assets that involve educational, social and intellectual knowledge provided to children through the process of socialization. The socialization process takes many forms which include but not limited to; good parenting at home, provision of education related resources, positive behaviour moulding, instilling positive social values, and enhancing educational aspirations (DeJong & Leseman, 2001; Weisleder & Fernald, 2013; Lugo-Gil & Tamis-LeMonda, 2008). Brown, Hurst and Hail (2016) have observed that since families have great influence on pupils' success in school, they need to transmit to their children the tools to develop more cultural capital in schools which is key to schooling success. Examples of home-based cultural assets that are positively related to children success in school include cognitive skills, social competence, language skills, and cooperative skills (Harris & Graves, 2010).

In his contribution towards cultural capital theory in relation to learning achievement, Fan (2001) advanced the view that in a home environment where children are prepared for the work they will be required to do in school, the children are likely to gain better learning outcomes. These outcomes for instance may range from improved learning achievements, higher rate of school attendance, positive behaviour, better socialization skills and enhanced educational aspirations.

Inferring from insight generated by the theory of cultural capital, it can rightly be averred that the solution to raising educational outcomes, in particular among young children is creation of an enabling home environment so as to equip learners with cultural tools (for instance positive attitude to learning, cognitive and language skills,

and so on) that match their role expectations in school. These cultural assets are critical in the sense that children use them as building blocks in their academic trajectories across the full range of schooling years.

2.1 Conceptual Framework

The study presumed that lower primary pupils' preparedness for upper primary (dependent/criterion variable) is dependent on the extent to which the home environment transmits cultural assets (independent/predictor variable) so as to meet school expectations. The study additionally hypothesized that the association between family cultural capital and pupils' preparedness for upper primary may be moderated by the level of academic optimism in a school (extraneous variable). The conceptualized relationship between the three categories of variables is shown schematically in figure 1.

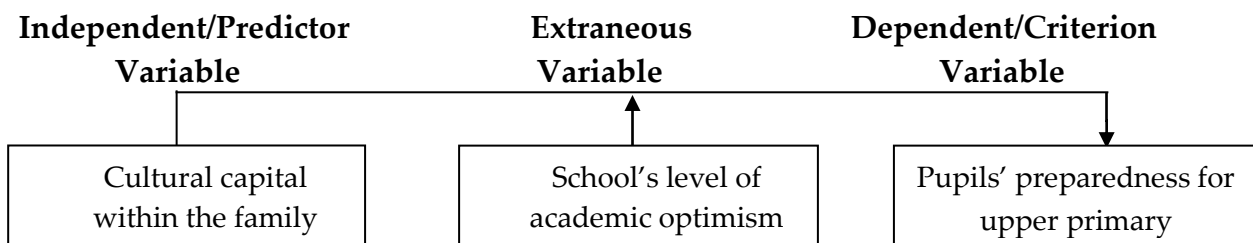


Figure 1: Presumed interaction between the three categories of variables subsumed in the study

The fundamental idea underlying the conceptualized interrelationship between the variables captured in figure 1 is that even in a scenario where the child may be brought up in a cultural rich family; such benefits may not enhance learning achievement and consequently preparedness for upper primary if the child is attending a school whose level of academic optimism is low. The converse is the case. It is worth noting that extraneous variables are capable of generating rival/competing hypothesis that might explain the results of a study thereby confounding its internal validity (Marczyk, DeMatteo & Festinger, 2005; Street, 2006). For this reasons, there is a need to control extraneous variables in order to minimize their effects on the dependent variable.

One of the recommended strategies for controlling extraneous variables is randomization of the subjects (Festinger, 2005; Christensen, 2004). In this regard, the study participants were selected through simple random sampling technique. This increased the chance that the extraneous factor that is school level of academic optimism was present equally in all the subjects (teachers) who participated in the study.

3. Literature Review

By nature, the child's first and most important teachers are the parents. This observation explains why a child's home environment largely determines whether or

not a child will make positive learning gains in school. Since parents play a critical role in the academic socialization of their children (Symeou, 2007), it follows that children who receive proper socialization at home are more likely to achieve high in school. For instance, if children are well exposed to knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours that is compatible with school expectations they are highly likely to make substantial progress in school. This is primarily because; home-school match in the context of schooling process has implications for children's early adaptation to and success at school (Barbarin, Downer, Odom & Head, 2010).

In their work on the correlates of schooling achievement, Dufur, Parcel, Troutman (2013) observed that parental involvement in a child's education(e.g., checking homework, discussing school activities with the children at home and so on) has a more powerful influence on academic performance than anything about the school the child attends. The authors further noted that the effort put forth by parents, for instance setting high expectations for the child has a bigger impact on academic achievement than the effort expended by either teachers or learners themselves.

The view that parents' effort towards their children's educational achievement is crucial is consistent with Jaeger and Mollegaard (2017) research findings. The findings for instance indicated that exposure of children to an inherently educational environment at home(for instance, helping the child with homework, rewarding child's effort in school, demonstration of a positive attitude about education to children etc.) provides children with cultural capital assets by way of skills, knowledge, norms, and aspiration which gives them an advantage in school. The study by Meissel, Meyer, Yao and Rubie-Davies (2017) has further demonstrated that teachers are more likely to gravitate towards pupils who display qualities that approximate school expectations. This means that such children may get more one-on-one contact with the teacher compared with their counterparts from cultural deficient homes. This reality may account for differential performance and by implication successful progression of pupils in many education systems across the world.

3.1 Methodology

The study used *ex-post facto* research design. This design is utilized in a situation where the independent or predictor variable(s) and the dependent variable(s) have already interacted. In this regard, the researcher cannot manipulate the independent variables(s) to determine their effect on the dependent/criterion variable(s). In this case, the effect of the interaction between the independent and dependent variables is determined retrospectively (Kerlinger, 1986). This design was deemed ideal because the study purposed to determine retrospectively the extent to which family-level cultural capital could be influencing pupils' preparedness for upper primary curriculum.

3.2 Instrumentation

Targeted data was collected through a personally delivered questionnaire from a sample size of 254 class three teachers who were selected through simple random sampling from a total population of 706 teachers in the 681 public primary schools in

the study locale. The sample size of the teacher participants was determined using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) Table for determining sample size from a given population. The decisions to focus on class three teachers was based on the reasoning that they handle children in the final grade in lower primary and hence are the best placed individuals to report on the link between family-level cultural capital and pupils' preparedness for upper primary.

The questionnaire had ten items(10) Likert scale items which referred to various aspects of home-level cultural capital that have the potential to enhance learning in lower primary and consequently boost pupils' preparedness for upper primary. Respondents were requested to indicate the extent to which each item described the condition of their pupils' homes. Items had five response options labeled "to a very large extent"; "to a large extent"; "to a moderate extent"; "to some extent" and "to a small extent". The five options were allocated "5, 4, 3, 2, and 1 scores respectively.

The allocated scores in the five response options were utilized in computing respondents' mean scores for each items in the instrument. This task was accomplished through summing up of the scores from each item and dividing the results by the total number of respondents (n=254). A higher mean score implied that the dimension of cultural capital under focus was a significant academic enabler among lower primary pupils (and consequently a booster to teachers effort to prepare them for upper primary) and vice versa. The mean were expected to range from a minimum of 1 to a maximum of 5. Based on the anticipated mean score ranges, level of home-based cultural capital influence (CCI) index was formulated which acted as a guide for interpreting the extent to which each of the ten dimensions of cultural capital was impacting on pupils' preparedness for upper primary. The formulated (CCI) index is shown in Table1.

Table 1: Expected Mean Score Ranges by Level of CCI on Pupils' Preparedness for Upper Primary

Mean Score Range	Level of CCI
1-1.99	Very low influence
2-2.99	Low influence
3-3.99	High influence
4-5.00	Very high influence

3.3 Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

The Instrument's validity and reliability were estimated using twenty (20) randomly selected class three teachers in the neighbouring Nyandarua West Sub-county. With regard to validity, the twenty teachers were requested to assess the extent to which the ten items in the instrument were adequately measuring family-level cultural capital in relation to pupils' preparedness for upper primary education. Based on the observations and suggestions proffered by the 20 teachers, changes which were deemed necessary were effected in the instrument prior to executing the main study.

Two aspects of instrument reliability were focused, namely internal and external reliability. Internal reliability which determines the extent to which multiple scale items are measuring a single idea (or construct for that matter) was determined using Cronbach's alpha. The alpha obtained was .92 or 92%. This implied that the ten (10) items in the instrument were measuring home-level cultural capital 92% of the time and that error may have occurred only 8% of the time. External reliability on the other hand addresses the question relating to the extent to which the instrument is capable of generating similar results when used more than once to gather data from a given sample under consistent conditions (Wiersma, 1995). This aspect of reliability was estimated through test-retest techniques. Specifically, the instrument was first administered to the 20 teachers and subsequently administered to the subjects after two weeks. The two sets of scores were correlated, in which a correlation coefficient of $R = .88$ was generated. The instrument's external reliability was therefore high since as Marczyk, DeMatteo and Festinger, (2005) have observed, an external reliability coefficient of .70 or higher is sufficient in social science research.

4. Results and Discussion

Collected data was analysed at two levels. First, the mean scores generated from responses to the Likert items were tabulated with a view to determining the relative perceived effect of each dimension of cultural capital on pupils' preparedness for upper primary. Second, the scores were further analysed through simple regression statistic so as to establish whether the focused dimensions of cultural capital were capable of predicting pupils' preparedness for upper primary. The core purpose of this analysis was to test the null hypothesis which postulated that pupils' preparedness for upper primary was not dependent on family-level cultural capital. The results from the two levels of analysis are summarized in Table 2 and Table 3 respectively.

Table 2: Perceived Influence of Cultural Capital Dimensions on Pupils' Preparedness for Upper Primary

Dimension	Mean Score
Favourable attitude towards formal education among parents	3.92
Supervision of homework	3.81
Motivation of pupils at home	3.80
Positive behavior moulding by family members	3.78
Enhancement of pupil's academic aspiration at home	3.71
High parental expectation for their children academic achievement	3.66
Availability of home-based learning resources, e.g., age appropriate books and magazines	3.50
Exposure of children to education related activities during weekends and school holidays	3.43
Provision of cognitive stimulating activities at home	3.12
Use of language pattern that approximates the medium of instruction in school	2.98
Grand Mean	3.57

Inferring from the level of CCI index presented earlier in Table 1, it can be deduced that, on the whole, the focused aspects of family level cultural capital had a high level of influence on pupils' level of preparedness for upper primary. The Table further reveals that three measures of cultural capital that were rated highly in regard to their influence on pupils' preparedness for upper primary were, favourable parental attitude towards formal education, including homework supervision and motivation of pupils at home. The data additionally seems to suggest that the three aspects of cultural capital which in the opinion of the respondents had a shortfall with regard to enhancement of pupils' preparedness for upper primary were; exposure of children to education related activities during school holidays, provision of cognitive stimulating activities at home, and use of language at home that is compatible with the medium of instruction at school.

Table 3: Regression Analysis Summary between Family Cultural Capital and Pupils' Preparedness for Upper Primary

Variable		R ²	Adj. R ²	df	F	P- value
Dependent	Pupils' preparedness for upper primary	.481	.472	253	3.491	.046*
Independent	Family cultural capital		$\beta = .111$		t= 1.770	.049*

* P \leq .05

From the data presented in Table 3, it is clear that there was a statistically significant linear relationship (F= 3.491; df= 253; P< .05) between family cultural capital and pupils' preparedness for upper primary. This indicates that the selected family-level cultural factors predicted pupils' preparedness for upper primary significantly. The computed beta value ($\beta = .111$) was not only positive but also statistically significant (t= 1.770; P< .05). This finding implies that family's cultural capital had a positive influence on pupils' preparedness for upper primary. Put differently, the families in the study area were on the whole providing children with an academically favourable environment which had a significant additive effect on teachers' effort to prepare pupils for the upper primary curriculum.

5. Conclusion and Recommendation

Findings generated by the study have important implications and lessons on how parents can assist schools to improve children's achievement outcomes prior to joining upper primary. The findings for instance revealed that the overall influence of the selected dimensions of family cultural capital was not very high (see Table 2) when measured against the CCI index formulated in Table 1. The areas where families seemed to fall short of their roles expectations were those relating to exposure of children to activities that inherently educational in nature and language that matches the official language of instruction (in this context English language) in school. Drawing on these findings, there is a need for schools to sensitize parents on the role they are expected to play so as to enhance their children's learning gains and thus augment

teachers' efforts to prepare them (children) for the upper primary. To achieve this, schools should connect with parents through parent-teacher conferences, and occasionally organizing home visits by teachers, whose additive effect on enhancing parents' capacity to assist their children cannot be gainsaid.

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